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THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA

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American educational journals and the American press in general have published but few notices concerning the important events that have been transpiring in educational circles in Russia during the past and the current year. However, these events are so important for the light they throw on the conditions under which the educational system of Russia develops, and in particular on the difficulties presented by the problems of education reform in that country, that they cannot fail to be of interest to American teachers.

Of greatest importance and interest is the contest that has been carried on between the minister of education (officially called the minister of popular enlightenment) on the one hand and the authorities of higher educational institutions, chiefly universities and technical schools.¹ The difficulty arose fundamentally from the difference that exists between the views of the liberal advocates of educational reform and the minister of education (representing the interest of the established government) as to the purposes and aims of education. In general it may be said that the social conditions in Russia, especially in the forms they have assumed during the last half-century, have been such as to bring into prominence the effect which the spread of education exerts upon the political life of the nation. The prominence of this idea may be compared with the stress laid upon the "social value" of education in America at the present time. Undoubtedly both the Russian government officials and the liberal reformers would agree that the aim of education is to produce good and efficient citizens, but they would certainly hold more or less widely differing views as to what constitutes a citizen of that type. The

¹A number of the technical schools lie outside the jurisdiction of the minister of education. Accordingly they were not directly involved in the struggle.

views of the government on this last point are, of course, conservative. A St. Petersburg paper quotes them as follows: "The school should counteract the development of materialistic tendencies, should develop a conservative spirit in the youth, and strengthen in them the spirit of submission to the law and respect for authority," i. e., in a word, the school should develop loyal subjects of the Czar. Consistent with the general point of view the government² has shown special favor to the sons of the nobility and to others, who have given promise of future usefulness. Special schools have been established for such persons and their admission to higher educational institutions has been made easy, while difficulties have been laid in the way of any who showed evidence of becoming dangerous citizens. So government officials regard education for the lower classes as a *luxury*, to which they should not aspire. As to the views of the liberal "reformers" it is difficult, on account of the censorship of the press in Russia, to find definite printed statements. However, it may be stated with certainty, that their general purpose is to secure an educational system that will develop the moral and intellectual character of the citizen up to the point where he will be able to perform the duties of citizenship which are borne by the great middle and lower classes of most modern, constitutional states.³

The particular principle for which universities were contending last year (and are still contending, for the question is far from definitely decided) was that of *university autonomy*. A brief review of the history of university administration since 1863 is necessary to the understanding of the special rights in controversy during the recent struggle. In the above-mentioned year the Russian universities⁴ received a new constitution from

²Of course, we are here speaking of a sort of "general" or "characteristic" attitude of the government. It must not be forgotten that individual government officials entertain personally various views upon the subject of education, as on other topics. Some of the Czars, for example, have been extremely liberal, not only in their views, but in their legislation.

³Something like two-thirds of the population of Russia is at present illiterate.

⁴At that time there were universities at Moscow, Iuriev (Dorpat), Kazan, Kharkov, St. Petersburg, and Kiev. Since then universities have been established at Odessa, Warsaw, Tomsk, Saratov, and a second one at Moscow; while one is being planned at Tiflis.

the hands of the broad-minded monarch, Alexander II, who about the same time introduced two other reforms which were destined to have far-reaching influence on the educational system of Russia, i. e., the liberation of the serfs and the introduction of considerable rights of local self-government. The new constitution retained some of the privileges formerly granted to universities and bestowed some new ones. Among other things the senate⁵ of each university was empowered to elect the rector (president) of the university, who had a general oversight (*nablyudenie*) over the scholastic and economic departments of the institution. The chief governing body was to be the senate (*sovět*). Each faculty elected its dean. An executive committee (*pravlenie*, literally "Direction") composed of the rector and deans disposed of current business, especially of an economic nature. For judging student offenses and for the punishment of the same there was established a "university court" consisting of three professors annually elected by the senate. A pro-rector was elected to see that the rules governing the students were enforced, and finally a "sub-inspector" guarded the interest of the general law of the realm within the precincts of the university. The strong reaction that set in after the assassination of Alexander soon laid its heavy hand on the universities and a new constitution was issued in 1884, which effected important changes. The changes were all guided by the purpose of restricting the rights of self-government (autonomy) possessed by the universities and more effectively concentrating their control in the hands of the minister of education, and thus indirectly in the hands of the government. Russia is divided, for the purpose of school administration, into a number of districts, at the head of each of which is a curator (*popechitel*), appointed by the minister and confirmed in his appointment by the Czar. The new constitution gave the curator much more complete control over the universities than he had formerly enjoyed. All communications between the minister and the universities had to pass through the hands of the curators. The curator was empowered to call meetings

⁵ A governing body made up of the ordinary (i.e., salaried) and extraordinary (unsalaried) professors of the university.

of the senate, the "Direction," and the faculties and also attend them and preside. The rector was appointed by the minister of education and his appointment confirmed for a period of four years by the Czar. The powers of the rector were increased. The office of pro-rector was abolished, and his duties transferred to a special inspector appointed by the minister on the nomination of the curator. The inspector could not be a professor. He had a number of assistants. The deans were appointed by the curator and confirmed by the minister. The university court was abolished and its duties transferred in part to the inspector and partly to the "Direction." This new constitution was a heavy blow to the interests and ideals of the liberal professional group and to the free intellectual development of the universities. It awakened much discontent among the students also, and since 1899 it has resulted in frequent student outbreaks and repeated interruption of the course of scholastic life. In 1902 some relief was granted in the form of a "disciplinary court" of five professors elected by the senate and confirmed by the curator.

Such was briefly the status of the universities at the time when the war with Japan broke out. The consequences of that war are known to all. The so-called revolution of 1905, which brought to Russia a certain degree of freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief and of speech, and of freedom to hold meetings and to form organizations, a partially representative general government, and a quasi-constitution, brought also the abolition of the galling restrictions of the constitution of 1884. This was accomplished by an imperial *ukase* dated August 27, 1905, a document of such great importance that I translate its principal provisions:

§ 1. The senate is granted authority to elect the rector and his assistant (*pomoshchik*) from the number of ordinary (regular) professors, the faculties to elect their deans and secretaries from the body of professors constituting the respective faculties. The electees are to be confirmed in their positions according to the established method. . . . § 2. The duty of maintaining the normal course of scholastic life in the universities and responsibility for it is vested in the senate and (a) the senate is empowered to take appropriate measures for the purpose of fulfilling this duty. . . . The inspectors are made responsible to the rector. . . .

This document, though vague in its terms, was heralded as marking a new epoch in autonomy and as giving much wider powers to the universities than those previously enjoyed. It was supplemented in 1906 by further legislation abolishing the office of university inspector and re-establishing that of pro-rector, and on June 11, 1907, the students were given wider freedom of holding meetings and organizing clubs, "pursuing lawful aims," under the regulation of the senate. A "council of faculty elders" was also established and proved an invaluable institution for looking after the welfare of the students.

The hopes that budded out in 1905 to 1907 were doomed, however, to be short-lived. The "revolutionary" period was immediately followed by one of extreme reaction, the result of which was the crisis of last year. In 1908 the newly appointed minister of education, A. N. Schwarz, issued a number of "circulars," the effect of which was to diminish the independence of the universities in important particulars. (1) Among the number of special students, so-called "free-listeners," during the past two years many women have been included. The university administration admitted them on the basis of its interpretation of the existing laws and their act had been in a sense approved by the predecessor of the present minister. The latter, however, a former professor, issued an order excluding women from attending university lectures. (2) He also introduced a number of new entrance requirements. In addition to the regular evidence of scholarship, he required that students should present (*a*) a *svidētelstvo blagonadezhnosti*, i. e., a testimonial from the police to the effect that their careers had been such as to give promise of their future loyalty to the government; (*b*) each student must deposit with the secretary of the university three photographs of himself to be used for purposes of identification. (3) The council of the elders was abolished. (4) Changes were made in the duties of the pro-rector. (5) All public-school teachers under the jurisdiction of the minister were required to send to him a statement of their political views, and it was generally understood that such as held views of which the government does not approve would be dismissed.

These measures, as can well be imagined, met with a bitter reception among the university faculties and students and in the liberal press. Objection was raised not only to the measures in themselves, but they were regarded as an unwarranted interference on the part of the minister with the "inner academic life" of the universities, the direction of which had been confided to the senate by the above-mentioned *ukase*. The matter was discussed in the public press throughout the summer months and on August 28⁶ the senate of the university of St. Petersburg met and took up first the question of special women students as that demanding most speedy solution. They drafted a petition to the minister of education urging him to reinstate this class of students. (A similar petition had already been presented by the senate of Moscow University and had been denied.) At this meeting the pro-rector announced his unalterable determination to resign his position "in view of the alteration in the duties laid upon him." The same day the council of elders announced to the students that the institution was to be abandoned owing to the impossibility of its discharging its functions under the altered conditions. The women students brought all possible influence to bear upon the ministry, presenting testimonials both as to the adequacy of their scientific preparation and the high quality of their university work and also producing statements from professors declaring for the legality of their admission to university courses. As the minister categorically refused to alter his order, the matter was carried, with his consent, to the cabinet of ministers, of which he is a member. In the early part of September this body decided that the professors, on their own authority, and without compensation, might re-read their lectures to the women separate from the men but in university buildings. As it was practically impossible to fulfil these conditions, the question was no nearer solution than before, and on October 29 the emperor settled the matter by declaring the admission of women illegal, but by special dispensation allowing those who had been enrolled in previous years to complete their course.

Meanwhile the men students and the faculties were engaged

⁶The day following the third anniversary of university autonomy.

in defending their respective interests with not less zeal, but with even less success. On September 5, the day set for the beginning of university work, no lectures were read, the lecture-rooms being practically empty, although the corridors of the university were crowded with students earnestly discussing the situation. On the following days many professors attempted, but without success, to lecture, and notwithstanding their most earnest efforts to prevent disorders and allow matters to be decided by normal legal methods, the students of Kharkov, Moscow, and St. Petersburg universities finally decided to strike, and the senate of St. Petersburg university was obliged to report to the minister that it could not be responsible for the course of events. The minister replied that work *must* be resumed at once. The senate replied that it would be unwise to do so as acts of violence might result. The cabinet then advised the professors to "resume their duties" and instructed them to ask the aid of the police, if they failed to restore the normal course of academic life. The senate made an attempt and failed. The strike continued on September 27 and 30, and on October 2 the senate "gave it up" and resolved to suspend lectures contrary to the orders of the minister. The student strike had now extended to the institutions in Kazan, Tomsk, Yaroslav, Ekaterinoslav, Odessa, and Kiev. The rector of Moscow University had declared his intention to resign and lectures were delivered in Kiev under police protection! Thus matters dragged on until October 7 when the students, believing that their protest had had a sufficiently strong moral effect and that nothing could be accomplished by prolonging it, resolved to end the strike and let matters take their legal course. On November 29 the *pravitelstvuyuschii senat*, a body whose function it is to pass upon the meaning of ambiguous or disputed laws, handed down an "interpretation" or "explanation" (it is technically called a *ukase*) stating that the senates of the universities had misunderstood the intent of the *ukase* of August 27, 1905; that they were not entirely independent of the minister; that the *ukase* had merely granted to the professional body the right to "share in regulating the normal course of academic life," but did not empower them to establish new rules inconsistent

with previously existing legislation; that the minister of education still retains in full force the right to oversee and control all the acts of the university senates and corresponding bodies in other institutions of higher education, as well as the right to call the attention of the senates to their unlawful acts. This interpretation of the *ukase* of August 27 is calculated to blight all the hopes of the year 1905 and sweep away most traces of university autonomy, leaving the universities in a position not very different from that existing prior to the great reforms of 1863.

However, in the meantime a new university constitution has been drafted in the offices of the ministry. On December 18, 1908, it was turned over to the Council of the Empire (*gosudarstvennyi sovět*) and after being reviewed was returned to the ministry. It was then placed in the hands of a special committee to be revised and introduced into the imperial duma before the close of the session. However, the session closed before the bill was ready and consequently the universities have been obliged to open this year under the cramping regulations fixed by the minister of education as above described. In any case the chances are that this new constitution will not be a very liberal one. The strictest secrecy has thus far been maintained as to its provisions, and so intelligent discussion in the public press has been impossible. Furthermore, notices appearing now and then in the papers seem to indicate that the minister is planning other reactionary changes in the school system, among them the restriction of the right to enter a given university to such persons as reside in certain districts. For example, the intention is to admit to the university of St. Petersburg only students coming from the St. Petersburg and Vilna districts. He has also issued a number of new regulations tightening the government control over secondary schools.

It is plain that under such conditions rapid progress in the educational system of Russia is impossible, yet it is marvelous to see what private initiative and local administration have done and how widespread, one may almost say universal, the demand of the public for education has become. It would be easy to fill pages with the accounts of the enthusiastic activity of benevolent

landowners, such as Leo Tolstoi and hundreds of others of lesser fame, and of the local *zemstva*. Most of these efforts have been directed to the improvement of primary education, especially among the lower classes—the peasants in the country and the laborers in the cities—but a notable exception should be noted in the foundation last year of the *first private university* in Russia, established by the widow of the late General Shanyafskii, of Moscow. This university was opened last fall with 267 regular and 667 special students, one-third of them women. There was also opened last year in Dorpat an institution called the “Dorpat Private University Courses,” for admission to which 400 more persons applied than could be accommodated (218 men and 81 women were admitted),⁷ and efforts are being made to found a private university in Yekaterinoslav in honor of Karavaev.

I may add to these instances of the efficiency of private initiative, a brief account of two of the most important private educational organizations in Russia, the Educational League (*Ligě Obrazovaniya*) and the Society of Popular Universities, in St. Petersburg. The former was organized in 1907 as a private incorporated society having its central offices in St. Petersburg. Educational societies all over Russia are invited to affiliate themselves with it and co-operate with it, and many have done so—a very wholesome procedure, the effect of which is to give closer unity and therefore greater consistency and effectiveness to educational activity throughout the empire. The general plan of the league is to promote the cause of education in every way feasible, both in theory and in practice. The most important of the special activities on which it has entered are:

1. The foundation of a teachers' college in St. Petersburg. The problem of finding suitably equipped teachers is perhaps the most serious in Russia. The large number of schools that are annually founded keeps the supply far below the demand.

⁷ How inadequate the existing institutions of higher education in Russia are to meet the demands of the country may be judged from the above example and the fact that the Moscow private medical courses which have a capacity for handling 192 students (at least that was the number admitted) received 1,200 applications. Many of the applicants were of Jewish nationality.

2. Another important activity of the league was the drafting with great care of a revision of the existing general school laws of Russia (*proyekt shkolnago zakona*), which proposes important (in fact, radical) changes in the organization and control of schools and includes a skilfully drafted plan for the gradual establishment (throughout a period of six years) of schools sufficient to provide primary education for all children in Russia, and secondary education for a large proportion. It is hoped that this plan will have a large influence throughout the country in guiding local legislatures, city councils, etc., although it is regarded by the minister of education as too radical in the changes it contemplates. The Russian nation has now become so thoroughly awakened to the blessings of education that the establishment of universal and compulsory education in that country seems to admit of realization in the near future. The league, as all other similar enterprises, is worthy of the hearty sympathy and, so far as this may be possible, the co-operation of the American people.⁸

The Society of People's Universities (*Obshchestvo Narodnykh Universitetov*), which is in reality a system of university extension lectures and courses, had its inception in the St. Petersburg Society of Civil Engineers on December 9, 1905. On December 11 a committee was raised which drafted a constitution. This constitution was approved by the government on October 10, 1906. The actual work of the society began March 21, 1906, and has continued with few interruptions till the present. The society has provided an elaborate system of university extension courses planned primarily for the lower and middle classes in the cities of the St. Petersburg government. It provides systematic courses and special lectures both of a general educational and technical character, conducts also excursions, and provides direction for private reading. It also includes in its scope the establishment

⁸The league is especially desirous of building up a library on American education in connection with its teachers' institute, and as its financial income is small it would gratefully welcome any books, reprints, etc., on education in the United States, which American institutions or individuals may find it convenient to send them. Such gifts should be sent by mail (preferably registered) to the address: Ligë Obrazovaniya, Bolshaya Konyushennaya 1, St. Petersburg, Russia.

and equipment of buildings in which to carry on its work, the founding of museums, exhibitions, laboratories, observatories, etc., the opening of libraries, bookstores, and the like, and publication of books, maps, journals, etc., on education. The remarkable success with which this work has been conducted may be judged from the subjoined résumé of its activity.

| | No. of Lectures | No. of Persons Attending |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1906, spring semester | 43 | 3,274 |
| 1906, fall semester | } 214 | { 7,230 |
| 1907, spring semester | | |
| 1907, fall semester | 126 | 15,627 |
| 1908, spring semester | 242* | 21,729 |
| 1908, fall semester | 314* | 27,784 |
| | 939 | 83,384 |

* Two-hour lectures.

The lectures covered the fields of literature and history, art and music, general science, medicine, law, and social science, and were delivered in 13 halls in various parts of St. Petersburg at prices of admission running from 5 kopeks (2½ cents) to 2 rubles (\$1.05), according to the location of the hall, the seat, and the character of the lecture. The lectures provided for the poorest classes at merely nominal prices of admission are a financial loss, which is covered, however, by the larger admission prices paid by the more well-to-do classes. In addition to these lectures systematic courses have been conducted in literature, science and art (especially drawing and music), engineering (particularly mechanical and building construction), forestry, agriculture, and medicine. These courses have been largely attended. The income on this work last year was 25,439 rubles (\$13,300) and the expenses 24,632 rubles (\$12,850).

Similar activities are going on in other cities of the empire. For example, there is in Moscow a Society of Popular Universities, the report of which for last year calls attention to the fact that

the general burdensome conditions of life have lain heavily upon the activities of the society; that, however, the attendance at the lectures of the central division was about 26,000, while the attendance at the branches was

better. The society was constrained to draw upon its capital to some extent, as its income did not cover expenses. The government refused permission to make scientific excursions in the environs of Moscow.

The education of women is a question which is just now awakening very widespread interest in Russia. As Prince Wolkonski once remarked, the government has always regarded this as a very important question and has given it very serious consideration. The relation of women to the universities has been set forth above. The fact, however, that women are not freely admitted to the universities does not imply that they are cut off from higher education either general or technical. On the contrary, there are a number of institutions, generally called "higher courses for women." Such exist, for example, in Odessa, where a movement was started last year to introduce instruction in law. In St. Petersburg are located the Women's Medical Institute, to which last year 250 students were admitted (there were 350 applications, among them 100 from Jewesses, of whom 8 were admitted according to the statute which provides that the number of Jewesses shall not exceed 3 per cent. of the entire number), the Women's Polytechnical Courses (354 students admitted), and the Women's Teachers' Institute (150 admitted from 400 applicants); in Moscow, among others, the Moscow Higher Courses for Women (for which a new building is just being planned at a cost of \$250,000). In Dorpat are the Dorpat Private University Courses (300 students out of 700 applicants—219 women and 81 men). The large proportion of women enrolled in the Shanyafskii University has already been noted. There are other similar institutions in other cities. Finally we may call attention to the movement started only this year to transform the Keif Higher Courses for women into a woman's university (the first in Russia). A constitution is being drawn up (or possibly by this time has already been drawn up) to be submitted to the minister of education for his approval.

In spite of all the difficulties which hinder the progress of educational reform in Russia, extraordinary advances have been made of late years. The percentage of illiteracy has rapidly decreased, especially in the more western districts. In the Poltava government, for example, in 1906 there was a school to

every 1,647 inhabitants and 57 per cent. of all children of school age were enrolled. There is every reason to suppose that by the year 1920 European Russia will compare favorably in respect to the literacy of its population with the western European countries. Certain it is that there is at present an almost unprecedented intellectual awakening in Russia, which, as the writer knows from personal contact and conversation with representatives of the upper, middle, and great lower classes, extends through all the strata of society, and, in one form or another, has extended widely even among the crude and ignorant peasants.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

A. The University Constitution.—According to the latest reports accessible to the writer the above-mentioned special committee (consisting of representatives of the various departments of the government) has returned the preliminary draft to the minister of education, who has submitted it to the Council of the Ministers for further consideration and revision. A number of the members of this body have expressed their intention of offering amendments. As no printed report of the special committee will be authorized the press is still unable to publish any details. November 10 (old style—November 23, new style) has been fixed as the date on which the Council will take up the matter. It is not probable, therefore, that the bill will come before the duma (which is now in session) until after the Christmas holidays. It is not unlikely that the provisions of the bill, which are likely to be very conservative and galling to the universities, will call forth violent protests from both students and faculties, and may precipitate student strikes and riots.

B. Statistics on Secondary Schools for Boys.—The report of the minister of education for 1908 has just been published and gives the following statistics on boys' schools: The total number of secondary schools for boys in Russia was 523 (including: 279 *Gymnasias* (high schools) with 106,384 pupils; 17 six-year *Progymnasias* and 19 four-year *Progymnasias* with 6,002 pupils; 208 *Realschulen* (non-classical *Gymnasias*) with 59,301 pupils; total number of pupils 171,687. These schools are located in 308 different cities. Approximately two-fifths of the expense of maintaining them is borne by the general government, the rest by local taxation and private individuals. Twelve *Gymnasias* and eleven *Realschulen* were established this year (1909).

The duma is considering during the current session a bill providing for the establishment of universal, compulsory education. This bill had its origin in the ministry of education and is, of course, far different in its provisions from that drafted by the Educational League as above noted.